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(54) Portable work surface

(57) A portable work surface, which may be configured as a clip board or tray is a rigid board 1 in which opposed edges 3, 4 have one or more pairs of notches 5. The notches 5 are positioned so that when they are engaged with the rim of a steering wheel 11 the intervening edge 6 of the board 1 is lodged against the underside of the steering column housing 12. When so engaged with the steering wheel 11 and the steering column housing 12, the work surface 1 is firmly supported without assistance from the user. For use as a clipboard, a clamp 2 for papers is provided.

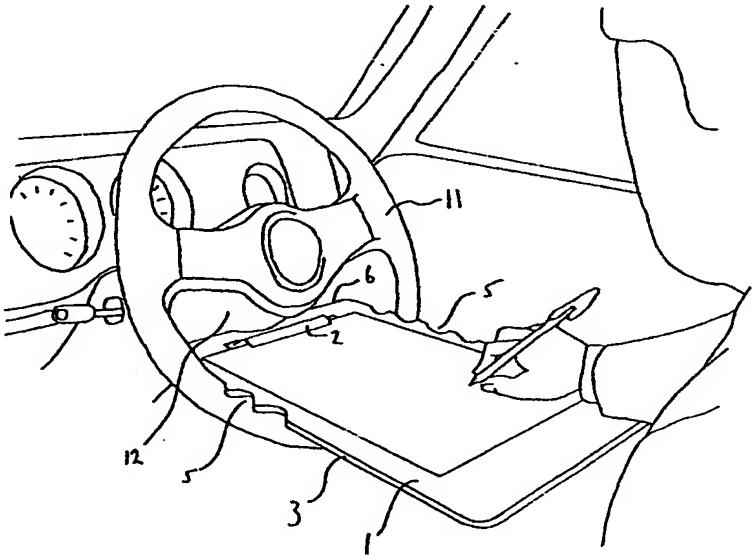

FIG. 3

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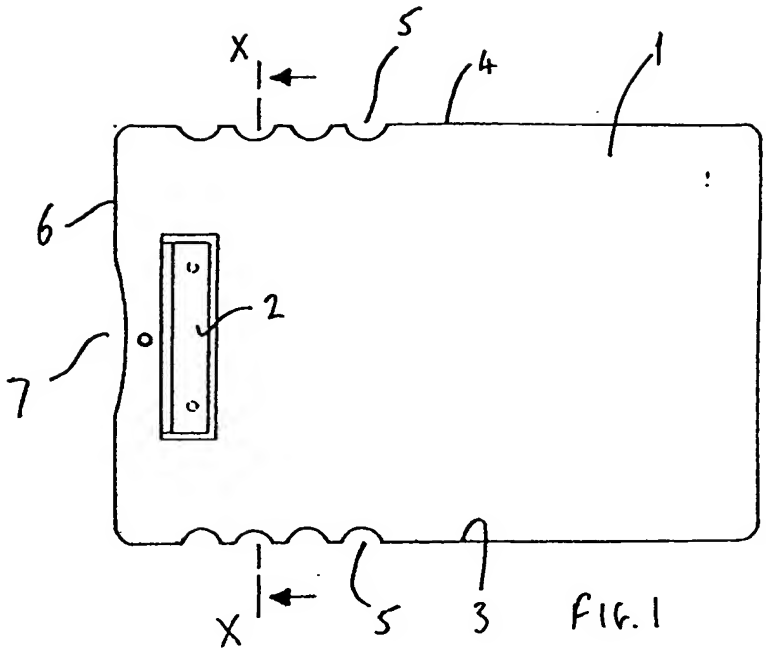

FIG. 1

FIG. 1(a)

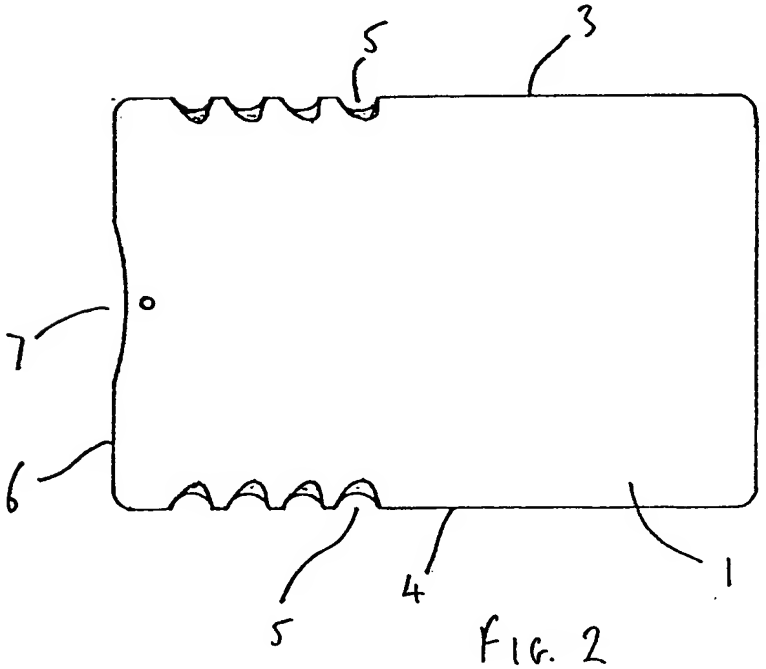

FIG. 2

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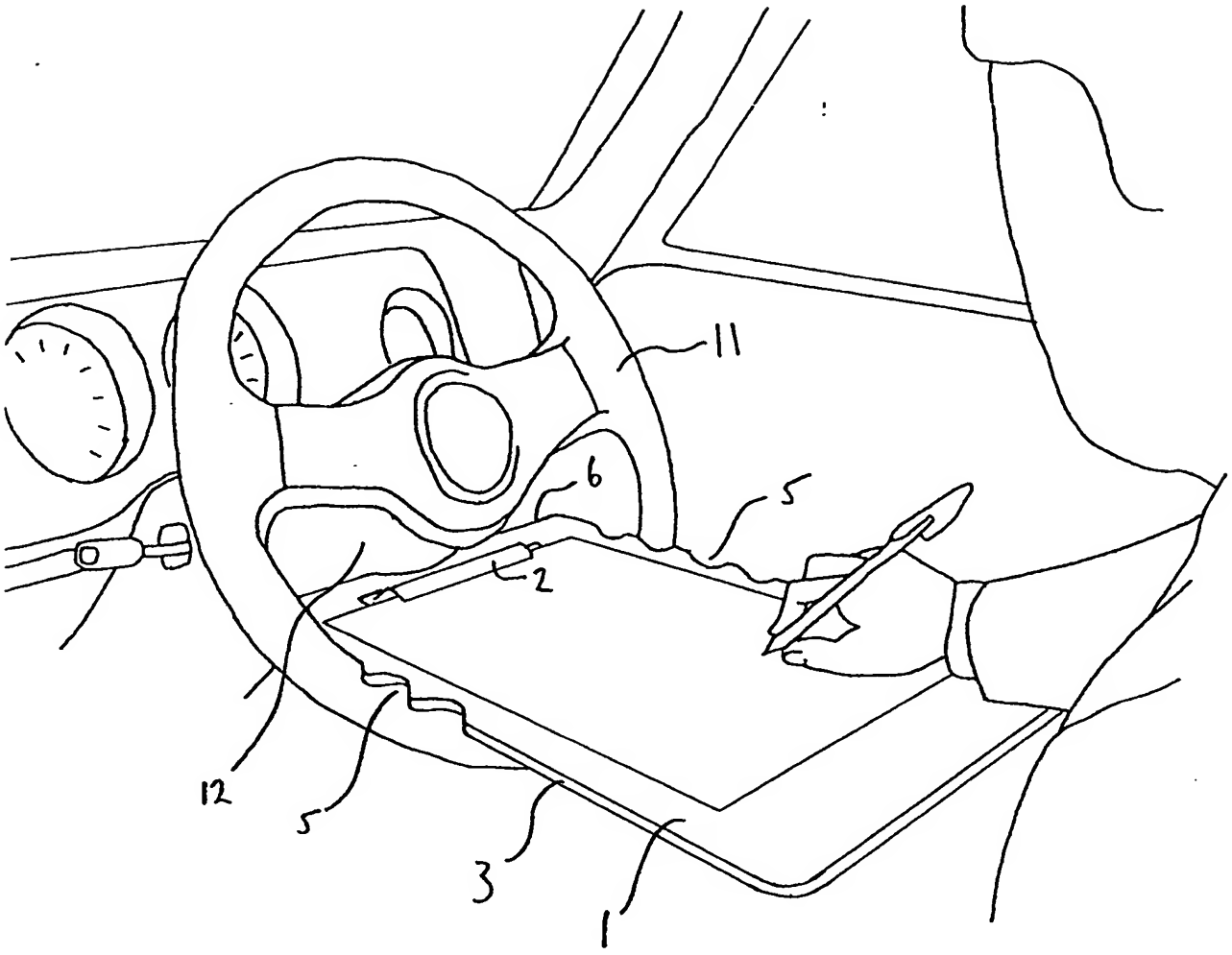

FIG. 3

SPECIFICATION

Portable work surface

This invention relates to a portable work surface for use in a motor vehicle.

A clip board (a rigid board with a clamp for holding writing paper) is often used as a portable writing surface. It is awkward for a driver to use a clip board satisfactorily in a motor vehicle, for lack of a suitable place to support it. Additionally, it is usually necessary to steady the clipboard with one hand, so that the hand holding the pen or pencil must also be used to turn papers etc., which is inconvenient.

This problem is overcome in the present invention by providing as a portable work surface a rigid sheet or board dimensioned so that it can be placed within the rim of a motor vehicle steering wheel. A notch is formed in each of two opposed edges of the sheet or board. The pair of notches are dimensioned so that they can be engaged with the rim of the steering wheel.

If the notches are deep enough, the work surface may be self-supporting when the notches are engaged with the steering wheel. However, so that the notches do not encroach unduly on the available work space, in normal use the notches are positioned so that an edge or surface of the sheet or board bears against another surface within the vehicle. For example, with certain shapes of steering wheel, one of the opposed edges may bear against the underside of a spoke of the steering wheel. In another embodiment, one end of the sheet may be supported on the lap or knees of the driver. In the preferred embodiment the notches are positioned so that the edge of the sheet or board which has been passed through the steering wheel is lodged against the underside of the steering column or the steering column housing.

The sheet or board thus engaged with the steering wheel and the steering column or its housing is rigidly supported in that position and may be used as a firm work surface by the driver of the vehicle. The surface of the sheet or board which is uppermost in use may have mounted thereon a clamp for papers so that the work surface may be used in the manner of a conventional clip board. Alternatively, the work surface may be used without a clamp as a calculator support or a bookrest, or as a tray for drinks or snacks.

The work surface may be provided with more than one pair of notches which are positioned so that the work surface can be used with various steering wheel/steering column combinations so as to suit a wide range of motor vehicles. A shallow notch of indentation may be provided on the edge of the sheet or board which bears against the steering column so as to provide a more secure engagement of that edge with the steering column or its housing.

One example of the preferred embodiment of a portable work surface in accordance with the invention is illustrated in the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is an upper plan view of the portable work surface;

Figure 1(a) is a cross-section along line X-X of Figure 1;

Figure 2 is an under plan view of the portable work surface; and

Figure 3 is a perspective view showing the portable work surface engaged with a motor vehicle steering wheel.

Referring to the drawings, the portable work surface 1 is shown having dimensions roughly equivalent to commercially available clip boards. The dimensions are not critical providing that the work surface can be inserted into the space within a steering wheel 11. The length needs to be sufficient to engage with the steering column or its housing while leaving a sufficient amount of the work surface from the steering wheel to provide a satisfactory working area. Following the manner of a conventional clip board, the shape of the work surface is preferably rectangular, but any other shape is possible, provided that one end is dimensioned to fit within the steering wheel as described above. For example a part-circular working area may be provided if use as a tray is envisaged, and a rim may be provided to retain articles on the work surface. Equally the work surface may be apertured to hold items such as drinking cups. For use as a clip board, a clamp 2 for papers is provided on the surface of the board which will be uppermost in use. The paper clamp may be of any conventional configuration such as a spring loaded clip or a lockable jaw device. The clamp may be permanently or detachably secured to the work surface.

The opposed edges 3 and 4 of the work surface contain one or more pairs of notches 5. The notches are of a suitable shape, most easily semi- or part-circular, to accommodate therein the rim of the steering wheel. In a relatively thin sheet, such as of plywood, the notched can be simple part-circular cut-outs. In a thicker board, for example chipboard, the grooves defined by each pair of notches are preferably angled in towards each other to define sloping surfaces to assist in a firm engagement with the curve of the steering wheel. Each pair of notches is positioned so that for a particular variety of motor vehicle, when the pair of notched are engaged with the rim of the steering wheel, the edge 6 of the work surface between the opposed edges 3, 4 which has been passed through the steering wheel will bear against the underside of the steering wheel column or its housing. With this three-point engagement, the work surface is firmly supported against downward pressure on the work area which remains protruding from the steering wheel. To assist in engagement of the edge 6 with the steering column, it is provided with a shallow notch 7 which again may be part-circular or otherwise appropriately shaped to suit the surface of the steering column or housing against which it is lodged.

The work surface may be formed from any readily available ridig sheet material or board. Typical materials are plywood, chipboard, fibreboard, par-

ticleboard or even plastics or metal sheets.

To protect writing paper or other documents held in the clamp on the work surface, a cover sheet may be provided which is permanently or detachably hinged to one edge of the work surface.

CLAIMS

1. A work surface for use in a motor vehicle comprising a rigid sheet or board dimensioned so as to be placeable within the rim of the vehicle's steering wheel, a notch being formed in each of two opposed edges of the rigid sheet or board so that the pair of notches may be engaged with the rim of the steering wheel so that the sheet or board is supported by the steering wheel.

2. A work surface for use in a motor vehicle comprising a rigid sheet or board dimensioned so as to be placeable within the rim of the vehicle's steering wheel, a notch being formed in each of two opposed edges of the rigid sheet or board so that the pair of notches may be engaged with the rim of the steering wheel while another edge of the rigid sheet or board is lodged against the underside of the steering column of the vehicle or the steering column housing.

3. A work surface as claimed in claim 1 or 2 in which an edge of the rigid sheet or board linking the two opposed edges is notched or intended for location against the steering column or its housing.

4. A work surface as claimed in claim 1, 2 or 3 having a clamp for holding one or more sheets of paper on the surface of the rigid sheet or board which is uppermost in use.

5. A work surface as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4 in which the opposed edges of the rigid sheet or board are formed with two or more pairs of notches.

6. A clip board in which two opposed edges are provided with at least one pair of notches by which the clipboard can be lodged within the rim of a motor vehicle steering wheel.

7. A clip board in which two opposed edges are provided with at least one pair of notches by which the clipboard can be lodged within the rim of a motor vehicle steering wheel, the notches engaging the rim of the steering wheel while the inverting edge of the board bears against the steering column or its housing.

8. A clip board as claimed in claim 6 substantially as described herein with reference to the accompanying drawings.

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